

The Jungian Vessel

by Kai Charles Forest

Introduction

This unfinished book had its beginnings in an academic setting, as “The vessel in Jungian/Latin alchemy and the Grail Legend as a model for the therapy vessel in spiritual emergency.”

I’m hoping to complete it and to expand it. Future versions will have a more detailed Grail section and more on the archetype of kingship.

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Alchemy

Western alchemy had its beginning in the religious and philosophical ferment of the Roman Empire of the first few centuries A.D., which had many spiritual similarities to the present. For example, the ancient Roman state religion was mechanical and rule-bound. It consisted of outward observances, giving little or no scope within those observances to personal religious experience. Thus, there were many seekers of personal spiritual experience. Much like the hippies and flower children of the sixties, and their spiritual successors, these early seekers had to reach beyond the common experience of their culture to find a new way.

In antiquity, many of them found that new way in the mystery religions. For example, the worship of Isis and Osiris, of Dionysus, of Mithras, the observances at Eleusis – focused on that inner experience. So did some aspects of early Christianity. So did Gnosticism, both inside and out of the Church. Those early centuries were a time of spiritual syncretism and exploration, of focusing on inner experiences that later times designated “mystical” or dismissed altogether.

It was during that early time of spiritual seeking and syncretism that alchemy emerged. Its first texts – such as the visions of Zosimos, commented upon by Jung in *Alchemical Studies* – were in Greek. These texts were preserved in the Greek-speaking Eastern Empire, later to become the Byzantine Empire.

But in the Latin West, after the fall of the Roman Empire – variously dated to different points in the fifth century A.D. – knowledge of Greek, along with scholarly studies, became the province of a very few. Different parts of the Roman Empire lost contact with Rome, which brought with it a lack of military defense against the invasions of mainly Gothic and Germanic tribes. For example, in Roman Britain, the Emperor Honorius withdrew the Roman legions (military forces) in the year 409 A.D. Despite desperate pleas by powerful, Latin-speaking, Romanized Britains, those legions never returned, and Britain was eventually overrun by Germanic tribes from the East (who had ironically been hired as mercenaries to defend against the fierce Picts from the north). These Angles and Saxons eventually merged with the indigenous population to become the “Anglo-Saxon” basis of British civilization. But while that process was going on, and was repeated in various forms in other parts of the former Roman Empire, scholarly work was at the bottom of the list. The only place scholarship was preserved was in the Church, and there – although some classical texts were copied and handed, especially in the Irish Church, which had a long tradition of connection to the Egyptian monastic tradition – study of alchemy fell into oblivion.

Thus, for several centuries there was little or no interest in the West in these texts. But as the second millennium dawned, there was both a renewed interest in alchemy in the Western Latin-writing world and an emerging interest in the Grail legend. Both of these paradigms are concerned with transformational energies. They are related. And both can be very helpful in understanding the healing energies that emerge to help individuals come through spiritual emergencies.

This strong interest in alchemy persisted well into the seventeenth century. But with the coming of an even stronger interest in science, and with the increasing influence of the anti-mystical bias of Protestantism which had begun to manifest with the coming of the Reformation during the mid-sixteenth century, once again, alchemy fell into total obscurity. By the twentieth century, very few people had even heard of it, and those who had tended to regard it with derision for its “anti-scientific” nature.

It was not until 1928, when Jung was asked by German Chinese scholar Richard Wilhem to comment on an ancient Chinese alchemical text, “The Secret of the Golden Flower”, and subsequently became interested in

Western alchemy, that alchemy was seriously studied again in the West as a path of psychological and spiritual transformation.

Jung and von Franz on Alchemy

From about 1910 onwards, a little before Jung's famous journey to the U.S. with Freud to accept honorary degrees at Clark University, Jung focused his amplification of archetypal material on mythology, which indeed he called "a textbook of the archetypes." (Amplification, within a Jungian framework, refers to the use of mythological, alchemical, and other material in an archetypal context, in order to understand individual dreams and other inner manifestations.)

However, starting around the mid-1920s, Jung became interested in alchemy. Synchronistically, the German Chinese scholar Richard Wilhelm was working on a translation and commentary on an ancient Chinese alchemical text, "The Secret of the Golden Flower." In 1928, Wilhelm asked Jung to write a psychological commentary. Jung found in this text many concepts that for him were parallel to those of Western alchemy. (Jung, 1963, 204)

After this first exposure to alchemy, Jung started focusing in earnest on a study of alchemy, collecting rare books which – at that time – were relatively inexpensive and easy to obtain. As Jung describes it:

I was stirred by the desire to become more closely acquainted with the alchemical texts. I commissioned a Munich bookseller to notify me of any alchemical books that might fall into his hands. Soon afterward I received the first of them, the *Artis Auriferae Volumina Duo* (1593) [*Regarding the Art of Goldmaking Volume Two* – the date is in Jung's text], a comprehensive collection of Latin treatises among which are a number of the "classics" of alchemy. (Jung, 1963, 204)

As a young lad in gymnasium (the age equivalent of American high school, but more like American undergraduate level in subject matter), Jung had been an outstanding Latin scholar. Thus he was able to study the original Latin texts. He soon came across puzzling, indeed incomprehensible, sections and realized that he was dealing with symbolism of great complexity:

I worked along philological lines, as if I were trying to solve the riddle of an unknown language. In this way the alchemical mode of expression gradually yielded up its meaning. It was a task that kept me absorbed for more than a decade. (Jung, 1963, 205)

After devoting this length of time to such in an intensive study of alchemy, in the mid to late 1930s, Jung wrote the articles that eventually became the bases of his first book on alchemy, *Psychology and Alchemy* (the German version was first published in 1944). Jung had discovered themes that resonated with his theory of analytical psychology. As Jung notes:

I had very soon seen that analytical psychology coincided in a most curious way with alchemy. The experiences of the alchemists were, in a sense, my experiences, and their world was my world. This was, of course, a momentous discovery. I had stumbled upon the historical counterpart of my psychology of the unconscious. (Jung, 1963, 205)

Except for a relatively short time between about the late 1960s and the late 1980s, when the spiritual seeking aspect was especially culturally strong in the U.S., as described above, Jung has often been considered "way out there" by mainstream American psychology, which has its roots in the positivistic British-American philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jung, however, saw himself as continuing a very long tradition:

The possibility of a comparison with alchemy, and the uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology. When I pored over these old texts everything fell into place: the fantasy-images, the empirical material I had gathered in my practice, and the conclusions I had drawn from it. I now began to understand what these psychic contents meant when seen in historical perspective. My understanding of their typical character, which had already begun with my investigation

of myths, was deepened. (Jung, 1963, 205)

Over the ensuing approximately twenty years, Jung devoted much of his attention and writing to the alchemy, particularly medieval Latin alchemy. (Though Jung does refer to ancient Greek alchemy by means of comparison, the only chapter in the Collected Works (CW) that is devoted entirely to a study of an ancient Greek alchemist is “The Visions of Zosimos” in *Alchemical Studies*.)

These works include: *Psychology and Alchemy*, CW 12; *Alchemical Studies*, CW 13; “The Psychology of the Transference” (in CW 16, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*); “The Fish in Alchemy,” “The Alchemical Understanding of the Fish,” and a chapter on Christian alchemy (in CW 9b, *Aion: Researches Into the Phenomenology of the Self*); and Jung’s final book-length work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry Into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, CW 14.

Jung was fortunate in having a helper and eventually colleague in the work of understanding and writing about alchemy. In the early 1930s, a young woman, Marie-Louise von Franz, came to Zurich and met with Jung. She had just graduated gymnasium and was thinking about what to study at the university. Jung suggested classics, and von Franz eventually went on to receive her Ph.D. in classics and to teach at the gymnasium level for several years (about equivalent to American undergraduate studies). Eventually von Franz became herself a Jungian analyst, and wrote several books on alchemy of her own, including *Alchemy*, *Alchemical Active Imagination*, and her critical Latin text, translation, and commentary on “Aurora Consurgens” (“The Rising Dawn”), a thirteenth-century alchemical work attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas. (In the German edition of Jung’s Collected Works, von Franz’s edition of “Aurora Consurgens” is the third volume of *Mysterium Coniunctionis*; in the English edition not included, but is published separately.)

Von Franz also wrote an introduction to alchemy, which describes alchemy’s origins in ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek philosophy and religion, and *Alchemical Active Imagination*, which uses the texts of Gerhard Dorn, a sixteenth century German alchemist and philosopher (also referenced by Jung throughout the Collected Works and especially in the final chapter of *Mysterium Coniunctionis*), to discuss the important alchemical concept of imaginatio and its relationship to the Jungian meditative practice of active imagination.

Although, as noted above, the tradition of Latin alchemy began in the West around the year 1000 A.D., it did not begin in a vacuum. The earliest writings on alchemy that we have date back to the second and third centuries A.D., and were written in ancient Greek, the language of philosophy and scholarship in the Roman Empire (though as the ancient Romans were increasingly exposed to these works, they too began to write on such topics in Latin). Jung writes “on the visions of Zosimos of Panopolis, an important alchemist and Gnostic of the third century A.D.” (Jung, 1967, 59)

Jungians on Alchemy

Partly because of its abstruse nature, requiring a thorough grounding in the complexities of ancient Graeco-Roman religion and Gnosticism, and partly because its “essentialist” spiritual nature is unpopular in the current academic climate, alchemy has not been a subject for much research and writing even within the Jungian community. The term “essentialist” comes from the Latin verb “esse”, “to be”, and refers to points of view that include a sense of ultimate Being that is not created by humankind.

In other words, an essentialist point of view is diametrically opposed to an existentialist point of view, which in its original atheistic form in France in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s denied the existence of the Divine in any form. This fit in all too well with the atheistic deconstructionist point of view which was developing around the same time in the same post-World War II French literary and philosophical circles, and in its way is as absolutist in denying the existence of the Divine as any medieval theologian. Since Latin alchemy developed in the predominantly Christian West, with most Latin alchemists considering themselves Christians and many Latin alchemists being ordained clergy people, an attempt to understand alchemy from a non-essentialist viewpoint is a

reductionistic failure that destroys - in what Jung called a “nothing but” approach - the deep spiritual treasures alchemy offers.

There have been a number of books, chapters, and articles that deal with alchemy in general, though relatively few have to do specifically with the alchemical vessel. Those that do are included in “The Alchemical Vessel” section, below. Here is a brief summary of the Jungian literature on alchemy since 1960. It is not exhaustive, including only major and/or popular writings.

Aniella Jaffé, the co-writer (along with Jung) of Jung’s autobiography, summarizes Jung’s approach to alchemy in “The Influence of Alchemy on the Work of C. G. Jung” (1967, 1-25). Though she does not describe the alchemical vessel, she does mention the circle, mandala, and circumambulation of the center as totality symbols (1967, 9). These are all structurally related to the alchemical vessel. Also, mentioning a personal experience of her own while in analysis with Jung, Jaffé writes:

Once, at one of my first analytical sessions during the late thirties, Jung greeted me with the words that he wanted to show me “something very precious and secret.” He fetched a slim folio volume with a brown leather spine down from the shelves and gave it to me. It was the *Mutus liber* (La Rochelle, 1677), the first alchemical book I ever held in my hands. Looking at its pictures and talking about alchemy, we passed one of those unconventional analytic hours which were characteristic of Jung’s “method” [Jaffé’s quotes] and exerted a lasting influence. (1967, 12)

Jaffé also notes, with regard to alchemy: “Essentially it was a religious movement, as might be expected from the numinous quality of the unconscious contents that came to light during the meditations of the adept.” (1967, 15) This implies the unitary nature both of alchemy itself and of Jung’s respectful use of it in understanding how body and mind form “a psychophysical unity.” (1967, 22)

More recently, Edward Edinger’s *Anatomy of the Psyche* (1991) provides a good description of several alchemical processes, each taking up a chapter. Edinger also provides brief clinical vignettes or dreams (usually several in each chapter) to illustrate the given alchemical process.

Joseph Henderson, a co-founder of the San Francisco Jung Institute shortly after World War II, and Dyane Sherwood, also a Jungian analyst, produced a noteworthy edition of the *Splendor Solis*, one of the very few books to reproduce full-color alchemical illustrations and interpret them. (2003).

The Alchemical Vessel

Jung and Von Franz

A main section in Jung’s Collected Works on the alchemical vessel is found in *Psychology and Alchemy* (1953). The text itself is actually quite brief; there are a lot of footnotes from alchemical works, some of which will be considered later. Here is part of that description:

For the alchemists, the vessel is something truly marvelous: a *vas mirabile* [wondrous vessel]. ... “Unum est vas” (the vessel is one) is emphasized again and again. It must be completely round, in imitation of the spherical cosmos, so that the influence of the stars may contribute to the success of the operation. It is a kind of matrix or uterus from which the *filius philosophorum* [son of the philosophers], the miraculous stone, is to be born. Hence it is required that the vessel be not only round but egg-shaped. (Jung, 1953, 236-238)

The oneness, the unity, and the roundness of the vessel connect it with the figure of the mandala, the uniting symbol that Jung considers at length in the first part (dream analysis) of *Psychology and Alchemy*. As we will see later on, these qualities and characteristics are crucial for the energy vessel in spiritual emergency.

The alchemists wrote “typice, symbolice, metaphorice” – archetypally, symbolically, metaphorically. So it is not surprising – though it may be complex and puzzling – that the vessel is far more than an actual physical thing.

Indeed, it is an energy construct:

One naturally thinks of this vessel as a sort of retort or flask; but one soon learns that this is an inadequate conception since the vessel is more a mystical idea, a true symbol like all the central ideas of alchemy. (Jung, 1953, 238)

Jung continues:

Thus we hear that the *vas* is the water or *aqua permanens* [the “lasting” or “abiding” water, an important symbol for the transformative substance in Latin alchemy], which is none other than the Mercurius of the philosophers. But not only is it the water, it is also its opposite: fire. (Jung, 1953, 238)

Thus, the alchemical vessel is connected with some of the most powerful transformative symbols in Latin alchemy. It is both a container and what is contained within it. Thus, it represents a paradoxical oneness that must indeed be understood “typice, metaphoricice, symbolice.”

As Jung (1959) notes:

The *vas* [vessel] is often synonymous with the *lapis* [stone of transformation], so that there is no difference between the vessel and its content; in other words, it is the same arcanum [literally “secret”, i.e., alchemical teaching]. (Jung, 1959, 238-239).

The Hermetic energy, the energy of Mercurius (known in ancient Greek mythology as Hermes and in ancient Egyptian mythology as Thoth) which the alchemists saw as “the key to the alchemical art” (Jung, 1959, 241) is seen as the vessel itself. Thus the alchemist Philalethes says that Mercurius is “our true, hidden vessel, the Philosophic [capitalization sic] garden, wherein our Sun [sic] rises and sets.” (Jung, 1959, 241) Thus, the vessel is a mythic energy construct, both container and contained, for the process of transformation. Paradoxically, the vessel sometimes also symbolizes both the container and the energy that is contained within it (Jung, 1959, 242). The alchemist pours the energy of the sacred teachings (*aqua permanens*, *aqua doctrinae* – “the abiding water”, “the water of the teaching”) into the vessel as its content. Often they also become part of the vessel’s material, part of the energy container, as well.

An important characteristic of the vessel is that it must also be “well-sealed” or “well-closed” (*vas bene clausum*) in order to provide a containing environment for the process of transformation:

The *vas bene clausum* (well-sealed vessel) is a precautionary measure very frequently mentioned in alchemy, and is the equivalent of the magic circle. In both cases the idea is to protect what is within from the intrusion and admixture of what is without, as well as to prevent it from escaping. (Jung, 1953, 167)

Marie-Louise von Franz (1966), in her analysis of a central medieval Latin alchemical text, “Aurora Consurgens” (“The Rising Dawn”), does not discuss the shape of the alchemical vessel. However, she does note that the alchemists advised great care in the amount of heat to be applied to the transforming vessel and its contents. Too much heat, and the material being transformed – and sometimes the vessel – would be destroyed. Too little heat, and transformation will never take place. Derivatively, there also needs to be a balance between a vessel that is too well-sealed and not well-sealed enough.

In clinical terms, “heat” can be understood as the amount of energy or intensity in a given psychotherapeutic situation. For example, a client working on abandonment issues and making some slow progress could be set back for months, or even have the therapeutic container destroyed – i.e. the therapy itself – , if the therapist scheduled what seemed to the client to be a long vacation and failed to inform the client until the session right before the vacation was to begin. This would be an example of too much heat. On the other hand, if the therapist never discussed the fundamental paradigm which was causing the client so much separation anxiety, but kept the client constantly wrapped in cotton batting, as it were, this would be an example of too little heat, where no change would ever occur.

Jungians

As noted above, an additional issue with the alchemical vessel, the *vas*, is that the alchemists recommend that the vessel must be a “*vas bene clausum*”. This is usually translated as “a well-sealed vessel”; literally it means “a well-closed vessel”. Newman (1981) posits a threefold form of the vessel, with innermost, intermediate, and outer rings, and discusses the nature of “well-sealed.” He notes: “For it is both the container and that which is contained, in that it holds the contents worked upon, while, at the same time, it is also that which is worked on. It contains the process as well as being the process.” (Newman, 1981, 230).

August Cwik (2006) uses Newman’s model, and in fact comments on the above quote: “We are familiar with the need for the ‘well-sealed vessel’ in analysis and any psychotherapy that goes to any depth. The *vas bene clausum* is a deeply symbolic image as well as a literal structural framework.” (Cwik, 2006, 211).

Cwik states in his abstract: “The container of supervision will be amplified using an image of the triple vessel of alchemy.” (Cwik, 2006, 209). Though this book is primarily concerned with the alchemical vessel in therapy, nonetheless its use in supervision is partially relevant. Specifically, the concept of the threefold vessel in supervision is understood by Cwik as follows:

But supervision is clearly a ‘not-so-well-sealed vessel’ ... The therapeutic relationship observed and commented on by the supervisor always appeared to me as a vessel within the vessel of supervision, with both vessels residing within a third larger institutional vessel, if supervision is going on in a training institute. (Cwik, 2006, 211)

Thus, the innermost vessel is therapy, the middle vessel is supervision, and the outermost vessel is social constructs: laws, regulations, training institutes, etc.

Interestingly, as Cwik points out, the innermost vessel is completely sealed. The second vessel has a pipe connecting it to the outside world (presumably for both input and output). The third vessel is completely permeable, with many holes. (Cwik, 2006, 211)

Cwik also notes that two kinds of “heat” are needed: the low-level transforming “heat” of the supervisee being held in the supervision container, and the high-level heat of confrontations that may occur (Cwik, 2006, 213).

Wiener (2001) connects the concept of the *vas bene clausum* to confidentiality: “Implicit in Jung’s alchemical metaphor of the *vas bene clausum* is the idea of an analytic frame with a space inside it for something vital, a relationship between two selves, to develop. For this to happen, analysts must respect their patients’ rights to confidentiality.” (Wiener, 2001, 431) Wiener notes that culturally the concept of privacy is unfortunately becoming less and less relevant. The *vas bene clausum* is a sacred space, “an analytic frame or container, in which something vital, a relationship between two selves, patient and analyst, may evolve.” (Wiener, 2001, 437) The integrity of the vessel may be compromised or destroyed by a lack of confidentiality.

Jennings (2008) mentions and defines the *temenos* (“temple courtyard” in ancient Greek), a common term in Jungian discussions of the analytic container, and then goes on to an alchemically-oriented understanding:

Temenos is a Greek word meaning a courtyard or grove dedicated to the gods. The term implies a boundary—similar to the space around Hestia’s hearth—between the secular outer world and the sacred inner one. ... Another form of the *temenos* is written about by Jung in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* where he speaks of the Gnostic *krater* or alchemical *vas hermeticum*. He speaks of how a higher god “gave to mankind the *krater* (mixing vessel), the vessel of spiritual transformation,” and a footnote added that the “*krater* was a vessel filled with spirit, . . . a kind of uterus of spiritual renewal and rebirth, and corresponded to the alchemical *vas* in which the transformation of substances took place.” (Jennings, 2008, 216, quoting Jung and Jaffe, 1963, 201)

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The Grail Vessel

The primary reference in the Jungian tradition to the Grail legend and the Grail vessel is the book by Emma Jung (Jung's wife) and Marie-Louise von Franz (Jung and von Franz, 1986). Studying and writing on the Grail legend was Emma Jung's lifework. She died before she could put her writings into book form, and von Franz took on this task, editing Emma Jung's work and adding much of her own insights. Thus, the book appeared with both Emma Jung and von Franz as joint authors, and that is how it will be referenced here.

Western Latin alchemy flourished between the eleventh century and the seventeenth century. Interestingly, interest in the Grail legend peaked during the earlier part of this period. Though this book focuses on the concept and symbol of the vessel, it is nonetheless illuminating to consider the broad outlines of the Grail legend in general. Emma Jung and von Franz summarize it as follows:

A mysterious, life-preserving and sustenance-dispensing object or vessel is guarded by a King [capitalization sic] in a castle that is difficult to find. The King is either lame or sick and the surrounding country is devastated. The King can only be restored to health if a knight of conspicuous excellence finds the castle and at the first sight of what he sees there asks a certain question. Should he neglect to put this question, then everything will remain as before, the castle will vanish and the knight will have to set out once more upon the search. Should he finally succeed, after much wandering and many adventures, in finding the Grail Castle again, and should he then ask the question, the King will be restored to health, the land will begin to grow green, and the hero will become the guardian of the Grail from that time on. (Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 9).

Turning to the Grail vessel specifically, the most probable etymology is from the Late Latin *gradale*, which means dish (Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 114). In the medieval writings on the Grail vessel, it is often seen as bringing miraculous food. For instance, Wolfram von Eschenbach, in his *Parzival*, has the Grail bringing:

Whatever one reached out his hand for,
He found it ready,
In front of the Grail,
Food warm or food cold,
Dishes new or old,
Meat tame or game.

[...]

Whatever drink one held out his goblet for,
Whatever drink he might name,
Mulberry juice, wine, or red sinopel,
He found the drink in his glass,
All by the power of the Grail,

Whose guests the noble company were. (Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 119)

There are also similarities between the Grail vessel and the alchemical vessel. In ancient Greek philosophy,

the *krater* (large cup or goblet) was seen as a mystical vessel of transformation, the “vessel filled with nous (understanding and consciousness) which is mentioned in the *Corpus Hermeticum* ...” (Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 135). Specifically in ancient Greek alchemy:

The vision of the Gnostic alchemist Zosimos of Panopolis in Egypt (third century A.D.), in which he saw a cosmic altar in the form of a bowl, is related to the vessel mentioned in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, in which men acquired nous (consciousness). (Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 137)

In his only full chapter on ancient Greek alchemy, “The Visions of Zosimos”, Jung discusses the krater and notes that it is the vessel “in which transformation into a spiritual being is effected. It is the *vas Hermetis* of later [i.e. Latin] alchemy” in which there is “spiritual renewal or rebirth.” (Jung, 1967, quoted by Jung, E. and von Franz, 1986, 137). Jung believes that Zosimos referred to a work called, in ancient Greek, simply “ho krater” (“the drinking vessel”). This vessel was filled with “nous,” It is also an energy construct; Theosebeia, a student, is urged to immerse herself in the energy vessel, i.e. in the nous which it contains.

Spiritual Emergency

There seems to be some debate about when the term “spiritual emergency” was first used. What seems to have emerged is that “spiritual emergency” tends to be used for an acute phase of spiritual development that can include, for instance, sudden kundalini awakenings and psychotic-like experiences.

The existence of non-ordinary states that are considered to be a connection with the Divine and spiritual growth goes back to the ancient world. This aspect of the Western tradition has often neglected given the dominant positivistic and materialistic bent of Western culture since about the nineteenth century:

The modern worldview of Western culture is characterized by an implicit division between the objective or physical realm of existence and the subjective or psychic realm of existence, with the objective or physical realm generally dominating the subjective or psychic realms to the point of virtual exclusion, as in the materialistic worldview which considers mind to be a mere epiphenomenon of matter. (Mansfield and Spiegelman, 1989, 1)

However, since almost the earliest times of Western writing, the pre-Socratic philosophers, this strand has existed. Heraclitus, writing in the sixth century B.C., was known in antiquity itself as “ho skotos” – “the Obscure One”. His Zen-like sayings – unfortunately reported in fragmentary form by later authors, since no manuscripts of his exist – note for instance that Dionysus is the one to whom “they are in an intense altered state”. The verb *mainomai* in ancient Greek indicates a kind of manic possessions experienced within a religious framework by the worshippers of Dionysus. Several centuries later, Saint Paul, on the road to Damascus, was seized by an overwhelming religious experience. Mystical experiences in the Western Christian tradition continued until (and beyond) the Reformation of the sixteenth century, which devalued and discredited non-rational experiences.

Those experiencing spiritual emergence or (even more difficult) spiritual emergency would have had absolutely no difficulty finding a framework for their experiences within the religious framework of the ancient world. But (at least in the post-Enlightenment West) they have a tougher go of it. Yet even within the past century, there are exceptions. The renowned Western psychologist and philosopher William James noted:

... religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy

during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence. (James, 1902)

Though James had enormous influence in other ways, in this instance practically no one in the Anglo-Saxon Western psychological tradition in Great Britain and America followed him.

This is particularly true with regard to visionary states and altered states of consciousness. As Rob Couteau (1990) in his review of John Weir Perry's *The Far Side of Madness* notes:

Although the literature is fraught with descriptions of symptoms, diagnoses, theories, and methods of treatment, few researchers address the patient as an equal. Rare, indeed, is the practitioner who has come to view psychosis as a strange sign of health: as an attempt to heal, or as a stage in a developmental process that transports the subject beyond "illness" or "normalcy" into a positive transformation of the self.

Such an exception is John Weir Perry. His *Far Side of Madness* remains a classic in the field for all these reasons. Working in the lonely tradition of Carl Jung and R. D. Laing, who each viewed psychosis as potentially purposive and telic in nature, Perry describes the goals—and the terrible dangers—that are typically encountered in the psychotic journey. (Couteau, 1990, 1)

Instead of a noxious threat that needs to be medicated out of existence, the psychotic energies of spiritual emergency constitute a transformational process that is set in motion by the homeostatic healing energies of the psyche, seeking balance and wholeness. As Couteau further notes:

Following the Jungian school of thought (from which Perry emerged), comparative symbolism and cross-cultural studies were used to uncover a holistic context, in order to view the motifs from a broader perspective. Further research led to the discovery of the same sequence of images in archaic religions and in other cultural phenomena. ...

The point of Perry's inquiry, and of those in that lonely tradition I alluded to earlier (it might be called the Romantic tradition in psychology), is not to "diagnose" artists, prophets, and mystics—not to label or denigrate the highest human values and aspirations—but to reexamine such rich transformation processes and to value the cultural elements that enrich human life. Thus, "Rather than what is pathological in mysticism, we ask what is mystical in its intent in psychosis?" (Couteau, 1990, 2-3)

Unfortunately, cultural shifts have not favored sensitivity to the transformative energies of spiritual emergency. As Perry himself summarizes it:

... in the 1970s there was an enthusiastic attitude of openness to new ways and experimental explorations in the mental health field, while in the ultraconservative climate of the '80s funds for such projects were cut off, then in the '90s brains are being treated rather than the psychic life of persons being assisted. (Perry, 1999, vii)

Note that Perry does not say "patients". He says "persons". Though a psychiatrist himself, Perry was

sensitive to the power of language in creating – or destroying – a therapeutic vessel. He himself, after a while, preferred to refer to the people he worked with as “individuals” (certainly not as “patients”), perhaps as a reminder of the individual and unique path that each person must take. Jung also comments on this in his chapter in *Aion* on “Gnostic Symbols of the Self”, where he notes that the Gnostics saw the Euphrates – one of the four rivers of Paradise in Genesis – as a symbol of an energy that provides to each individual the energies and sustenance he or she needs for his/her individual and unique path. [ref] As Perry notes, it is when the individual undergoing such experiences is “received in relationship” that the transformation can occur. (Perry, 1999, ii).

To return to Perry’s viewpoint in general: In the early 1950s, Perry was working as a psychiatrist in a mental hospital. He came upon an individual (as explained above, Perry’s later term, rather than “patient”) who the entire staff believed was totally delusional. Perry, however, saw patterns in her dreams and images. The problem wasn’t the images. The problem was that this individual was literalizing the images. In addition, she had no one who was listening to her.

But Perry (despite the derision of his colleagues) did listen to her. And from her inner experiences emerged a process of transformation that Perry was able to discern. This he describes in detail in his first book, *The Self in Psychotic Process* (1953).

A decade later, in the early and mid 1960s, Perry worked on the theoretical foundation of these patterns in terms of the archetype of kingship. He found that similar patterns of a king-saviour emerged across the mythology of a large number of cultures. Thus, the king became a cultural symbol for the archetype of centering and the archetype of order. The emergence of such a figure in modern dreams and inner images signals the emergence of a new center in the psyche; this is usually preceded, in Perry’s understanding, by a separation into warring opposites (often symbolized by opposing armies). This understanding Perry details in *Lord of the Four Quarters* (1966).

Ripley’s Cantilena

Jung had also noted the importance of the archetype of kingship as a symbol for the centering energies of the psyche. In fact, an entire 100+ page chapter of *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1963) is devoted to an exploration of this theme. There is a fascinating meeting of the symbolism of the king and the symbolism of the vessel in the section in that chapter on Ripley’s Cantilena. Canon George Ripley was a fifteenth-century English clergyman who wrote a number of works on alchemy. His “Cantilena” (“Songs”) is a kind of kingship myth where the king, speaking in the first person, says: “I was born in the house of the sphere.” In other words, the king is born in a vessel, conceivably an alchemical vessel; as noted above, the alchemists conceived of their vessel as round. Here the vessel both as a call to the soul-work of wholeness, and as a saving, healing vessel of transformation in spiritual emergency, come together.

A central theme in Jung is the idea of the return to the origins. This is echoed in Perry. Jung puts it very starkly: “When an organism is cut off from its roots, anamnesis of the origins is a matter of life and death.” (Jung, 1959, 180) Perry, too, believes that returning to the origins is a basis of healing – in fact, that the kingship energy that emerges during the process of spiritual emergency is, in a sense, that kind of return. Thus, kingship energy is, in itself, a kind of energy vessel for containing spiritual emergency.

Both of the themes emerge in Ripley’s cantilena. In the interests of accuracy, and as perhaps a small contribution to the study of this important alchemical poem, the translation included here is my own. The translation in the English version of the *Collected Works* eschews Jung’s quite literal prose translation, given in the German edition, for an explicitly archaizing poetic translation. Unfortunately, this results in some mismatches between Jung’s commentary and the text (for instance, “I was born in the house of the sphere,” upon which Jung

comments, is not in the English translation). I've also included headers for the poem, and some of my commentary.

Introduction

- 1 – En philosophantium in hac cantilena
Summa arcane concino voce cum amoena,
Quae mentalis iubili pullulate a vena,
Et mens audientium fit dulcore plena.
Behold, in this old song I sing in harmony
The deepest secrets of the philosophers with a pleasing voice.
That sprout forth from the vein of a joyous mind,
And the mind of those listening is made full of sweetness.
- 2 - In extremis partibus nuptiis Mercurii
Accidit post studium semel quod interfui,
Ubi vescens epulis tam grandis convivii
Ignorata primitus haec novella didici.
In the farthest regions it so happened
That I was present at the marriage ceremonies of Mercurius one time after study.
There, eating, I took part in huge banquets
Which at first I didn't know about and then I learned about them.
- 3 - Quidam erat sterilis rex in geniture,
Cuius forma nobilis et decora pura
Extitit, sanguineus erat hic natura,
Attamen conqueritur sua contra iura.
There was a certain king barren at birth,
Whose form was noble and with pure glory,
His nature was bloody,
Nonetheless he complained [which was] against his own customary behavior.

The king's self-description

- 4 - Rex caput corporum quare sum ego,
Sterilis, inutilis sine prole dego,
Cuncta tamen interim mundana ego rego,
Et terrae nascentia quaeque, quod non nego.
Why am I, king of all these bodies,
Barren, useless – I pass my time without offspring.
In the meantime I rule over all of these wordly things,
And things born of the earth – this I do not deny.
- 5 - Causa tamen extitit quaedam naturalis
Vel defectus aliquis est originalis;

Quamvis sine maculis alvi naturalis
Eram sub solaribus enutritus alis.
There is some natural cause
Or there is some original defect;
Although I came out without flaws from the natural womb
I was nourished by the wings of the sun.

- 6 - Ex terrae visceribus quoque vegetantur,
Suis in seminibus, et qua animantur
Congruis temporibus fructu cumulantur,
Speciebus propriis et multiplicantur.
From the innermost parts of the earth were also enlivened,
With its own seeds, and where they are brought back to life
At the harmonious times filled full of fruit,
With its own sorts and multiplied.
- 7 - Mea sed restringitur fortiter natura
Quod de meo corpore non fluit tinctura,
Infoecunda igitur mea est natura
Nec ad actum germinis multum valitura.
But my nature is strongly tightly bound
Because the tincture does not flow forth from my body,
My nature therefore is unfruitful
Nor is it effective for the act of generativity.
The “tincture” is a symbol of the alchemical substance of transformation.
- 8 - Massa mei corporis semper est mansura
Valde delectabilis atque satis dura,
Hancque, cum examinat ignis creatura,
Nulla mei ponderis abest caritura.
The mass of my body is always stable,
Very delightful and quite firm,
And when the fire examines it,
Nothing at all is absent from my weight.
- 9 - Meque mater genuit sphaericae figurae
Domi, quod rotunditas esset mihi curae,
Foremque prae ceteris specie purae,
Et assistens regibus dignitatis iura.
My mother brought me to birth in the house of the sphere,
That I might be attentive to roundness.
I would be beyond others of a pure sort,
And helping the kings with the custom of dignity.

The sphere is a three-dimensional form of the circle, which, as Jung points out in many places, is one possible form of the mandala – a centering energy of which the alchemists were clearly aware, and which often appears in

dreams at times of crisis when the unconscious seeks to restore psychic balance and equilibrium. To be born “in the house of the sphere” is thus a calling to serve the psyche, or soul. This is the literal meaning of the roots of “psychotherapy” – serving the soul. The mandala as an energy vessel is explored in that section, below.

10 - Modo tamen anxia illud scio verum
 Nisi fruar protinus ope specierum,
 Generare nequeo, quia tempus serum
 Est et ego stupeo, antiquus dierum.
 I only know, with anxiety, this truth
 Unless I bring forth fruit right away with the work of dreams and visions,
 I cannot bring to birth, because it is evening time
 And I am astonished, the Ancient of Days.

“The work of dreams and visions” was, for the alchemists, similar, if not identical, to the Jungian meditative practice of active imagination, as Jung notes (1953) in *Psychology and Alchemy*.

11 - Me praedatum penitus iuventutis flore
 Mors invasit funditus Christi sed ab ore
 Me audivi coelitus grande cum stupor
 Renasendum denuo nescio quo amore.
 Death has invaded me from the very basis of my being
 I who took as plunder the flower of youth
 But I have heard from the mouth of Christ with great astonishment
 That I am to be reborn, I know not by what love.

The medieval Latin alchemists were Christians, though of an eclectic kind. Ripley was an ordained clergyman, presumably deeply steeped in the Western Christian tradition. As Jung points out, sometimes his alchemical intuition led him in directions outside of the orthodoxy of his day. Rebirth and transformation is central to Christian theology as well as other traditions.

12 - Regnum Deo aliter nequeo intrare
 Hinc ut nascar denuo me humiliare
 Volo matres [sic = matris] sinibus meque adaptare
 In primam materiam et me disgregare.
 I cannot otherwise enter into the kingdom of God
 Unless I lower myself to be born anew
 I want to make myself ready for my mother’s lap
 And also to dissolve myself into prima materia.

“prima materia,” “first matter,” is the basic, unformed substance out of which transformation arises. A common alchemical saying is: “Solve et coagula!” – “dissolve and reunite!” (literally, “resolidify”) The king has reached a point where little repairs are not going to be enough. For a radical transformation – and “radical” means “from the roots” – the king has to totally dissolve himself in order to be reborn. This is one possible understanding of the Nicodemus passage in the Gospel of John, of Jesus’s teaching there about being born again.

The Mother

13 – Ad hoc mater propria regem animavit

Eiusque conceptui sese acceleravit,
 Quem statim sub chlamyde sua occultavit
 Donec eum iterum ex se incarnavit.
 To this the fitting mother brought the king to life
 And she hurried towards her unborn one,
 Whom immediately she hid under her cloak
 Until she embodied him again out of herself.

Symbolically the king's own proper or fitting mother is that aspect of the archetypal Feminine who can shepherd the rebirth.

14 - Mirum erat illico cernere connexum
 Factum naturaliter primum ad complexum,
 Foedere complacito at utrumque sexum
 Penitus post aeris ad montana transvexum.
 It was marvelous to see right away a connection
 Made naturally in the first embrace,
 By means of a pleasing alliance with each other,
 Wholly within to be carried from the air to the mountains.

At the end of the chapter on the Mandala in *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung (1953) quotes the medieval Christian mystic Meister Eckhart as saying: "It is within, wholly within." The energy of transformation starts within the soul and is then carried from there – "the air" – to connect with earth energy, via the mountains, who link heaven and earth. This connection of two seemingly disparate elements is one aspect of the "coniunctio" or "joining together" to which Jung (1963) devoted his final book, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*.

15 - Mater tunc ingreditur thalamum pudoris
 Et sese in lectulo collocare honoris,
 Inter lintheamina plenaque candoris
 Signa statim edidit futuri languoris.
 Then the mother entered into the chamber of her modesty
 And she gathered herself in her little bed of honor,
 Among the bedlinens and full of dazzling whiteness
 She brought forth signs of her future weakness.

The process of transformation is a deeply inward and private one. Thus "the mother" withdraws into seclusion for this inner journey, leading to the rebirth of her spiritual son, the king.

16 - Moribundi corporis virus emanabat,
 Quod maternam faciem candidam foedabat,
 Hinc a se extraneos cunctos exserebat
 Ostiumque camerae firme sigillabat.
 From the dead body a fluid came forth
 Which befouled the motherly white face,
 She got rid of all extraneous things from herself
 And she strongly sealed the door of her chamber.

The spiritual death and rebirth of the king is reminiscent of Paul's comments in his letter to the Romans: "Or don't you know that all of you who have been baptized into Christ have died with Christ, so that you may be reborn

and walk in newness of life.” (paraphrased) The transformation requires seclusion and privacy. The spiritual mother ensures this privacy by “strongly seal[ing]” her door. In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung (1953) quotes an alchemist who notes that the lapis, the alchemical stone of transformation, is that to which nothing superfluous has been added, and from which everything extraneous has been taken away.

17 - Vescebatur interim carnibus pavonis
 Et bibebat sanguinem viridis leonis
 Sibi quem Mercurio telo passionis
 Ministrabat aureo scypho Babylonis.
 In the meantime she was eating peacock’s meat,
 And drinking the blood of the green lion
 Which Mercurius served to her, with the arrow of passion,
 In a golden Babylonian goblet.

[Jung devotes many pages to an explanation of this stanza; to be considered in a future version].

18 - Impregnata igitur graviter languebat
 Certe novem mensibus in quibus mandebat
 Fuis ante lachrymis quam parturiebat
 Lacte manans, viridis Leo quod sugebat.
 Pregnant, therefore, she was seriously weary
 And certainly during the nine months in which she remained
 Having poured out tears when she brought to birth
 Moistened by milk, which the green Lion sucked.

19 - Eius tunc multicolor cutis apparebat
 Nunc nigra, nunc viridis, nunc rubea fiebat,
 Sese quod multoties sursum erigebat
 Et deorsum postea sese reponebat.
 Her skin started to appear multicolored
 It became now black, now green, now red,
 And she lifted herself up totally
 And then afterwards lay herself back down.

It has been said that the resting is as important as the doing. The mother knows when to rest again. It is at the point where transformation really begins to occur. Black, green, and red are alchemical colors. Black corresponds to the “nigredo”, the “darkening” of the matter which is being transformed. In psychological terms, this can correspond to a deep depression, a withdrawal from the outer world, which, as Jung notes in *Symbols of Transformation*, can often precede a powerful creative process and a later going out into the world. Green corresponds to the “benedicta viriditas”, the “blessed green”, of the alchemists, which, as von Franz and Emma Jung (1986) point out in *The Grail Legend*, is a color associated with vegetation, new life, the Holy Spirit, and the sensation function, which translates dreams, visions, intuitions, and other inner experiences into outer reality. Red corresponds to the “rubedo,” the “reddening,” at which point the transformation’s entering into outer reality for this point on the spiral has occurred.

The King returns to life – rebirth of the King

- 20 - Centum et quinquaginta noctibus languebat
 Et diebus totidem moerens residebat,
 In triginta postmodum rex revivescebat,
 Cuius ortus vernulo flore redolebat.
 She was weak for one hundred and fifty nights
 And She remained sad/lamenting during all those days,
 After thirty [more] days the king returned to life,
 His birth had a wonderful odor, like a springtime flower.
- 21 - Eius magnitudine primo coaequatus
 Venter in millecuplum crevit ampliatus,
 Ut super principio suo sit testatus
 Finis perfectissime ignis probatus.
 With her first greatness having been made equal
 [Her] belly, enlarged, grew a thousandfold,
 So that regarding his beginning it might be witnessed,
 The goal was examined by fire in the most perfect way.

Description of the vessel – the room – of rebirth

- 22 - Erat sine scopulis thalamus et planus,
 Et cum parietibus erectus et manus
 Prolongatus aliter sequeretur vanus
 Fructus neque filius nasceretur sanus.
 Her room was without rocks and flat,
 And upright with walls like an outstretched hand
 Otherwise an empty fruit would follow
 Nor would a healthy son be born.

For the work to be right, the vessel has to be right. The mother is exceedingly aware of creating a right vessel for the transformation to turn out well.

- 23 - Stufa subtus lectulum erat collocata,
 Una atque alia artificata
 Erat super lectulum valde temperata
 Membrana frigerescerent eius delicata.
 A stove had been placed under the little bed,
 And at the same time another had been set up
 On top of the little bed very temperate,
 So that her delicate limbs would not grow cold.

As von Franz (1966) notes in her commentary on the medieval Latin alchemical text, “Aurora Consurgens” (attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas, which von Franz believes is a possible attribution), for the alchemical substance to transform, the heat has to be exactly right. Too hot, and the substance burns up; too cold, and transformation never occurs. “Very temperate” is the midrange, the middle point, the middle way, where transformation is possible.

- 24 - Eratque ostium cubiculum [cubiculi?] firmatum,
 Nulli praebens adytum suum vel gravatum,
 Et camini etiam os redintegratum
 Ab inde ne faceret vapor evolutum.
 The door of the room was made strong
 Presenting its entrance to nothing serious,
 And the mouth of the furnace was re-formed,
 So that smoke would not fly out from it.

Jung (1953) notes that the alchemists emphasized the importance of the “vas bene clausum,” the “well-sealed vessel”, for the success of the work.

Solutio of the old king – lunar and solar energies

- 25 - Postquam computruerunt ibi membra prolis
 Carneae tetredinem deponebat molis,
 Illam Lunae similans sine coeli polis
 Postquam spirificans in splendorem Solis.
 Afterwards the limbs of her offspring there rotted
 She laid down the foulness of the heavy fleshly labor,
 Which made her resemble the moon without the poles of the sky
 Afterwards coiled in a spiral way towards the glory of the Sun.

“solutio” means “dissolving” or “dissolution.” As noted above, when the king returns to prima materia, this is a dissolving of his former personality. There is a Latin saying that “Fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt” – “the Fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling.” The king has willingly surrendered to this total dissolution of his former personality. That is why the transformation comes about in a peaceful way. As Jung points out, if the ego resists a necessary transformation, the dissolution can be experienced in a much more vehement and unpleasant way

Jung’s note on “spirificans” = “spiraling” also is a reminder of the spiral nature of psychological development and transformation. A problem or situation may arise that seems exactly the same as past situations. But upon reflection it’s clear that it is at a later point on the spiral.

Rebirth of the King

- 26 - Sic cum tempus aderat mater suum natum
 Prius quem conceperat, edidit renatum.
 Qui post partum regium repetebat statum,
 Possidens omnimodum foetum coeli gratum.
 Thus when the time came the mother brought forth her son,
 Whom she had conceived earlier, reborn.
 And after [his] birth she renewed [his] kingly status,
 Possessing a child who in every way was pleasing to Heaven.

In ancient Greek the proper time, the destined time for something to occur, is called the kairos. This is the kairos, the destined time, for the rebirth of the king.

Transformation of energies – square to circle

27 - Lectus matris extitit qui quadrangularis
 Post notata tempora fit orbicularis,
 Cuius cooperculum formae circularis
 Undequaque candeat fulgor ut Lunarior.
 The mother's bed which was square
 After that given time became round.
 Its bedspread [was] of a circular form
 In such a way that from there something like a moonlike gleaming might shine forth.

The transformation from square to round - or to a roundness that includes the square, which the alchemists called "the squaring of the circle."

Transformation of the square into the circle, of the nigredo into the albedo and rubedo

28 - Lecti sic quadrangulus factus est rotundus
 Et de nigro maximo albus atque mundus
 De quo statim prodiit natus rubicundus
 Qui resumpsit regium sceptrum laetabundus.
 Out of the square of the bed a circle was made
 And from the deepest darkness [it became] gleaming white and pure
 From which immediately the red newborn came forth
 Who, joyful, took up again the royal sceptre.

The coming from darkness into light is a profound transformation. As Saint Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians: "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." This is the alchemical transformation from the nigredo (darkening) to the albedo (brightening), which is also referred to as the "aurora consurgens," the rising dawn. This transformation enables, and results in, the king emerging – in psychological terms, the re-centering and renewing of the transformed personality.

The new/reborn king is honored.

29 - Hinc Deus paradysi portas reseravit,
 Uti Luna candida eum decoravit,
 Quam post ad imperii loca sublimavit
 Soleque ignivomo digne coronavit.
 From this time on God opened the doors of paradise,
 As the gleaming white moon honored him,
 God raised her [Luna] high to the places of supreme command
 And worthily crowned him with the fire-outpouring sun.

Again, the theme of the albedo, the whitening, comes forth. There is also the dual symbolism of moon (archetypal Feminine) and sun (archetypal Masculine).

30 - Elementis quattuor Deus insignita
 Arma tibi contulit decenter polita,
 Quorum erat medio virgo redimita
 Quae in quinto circulo fuit stabilita.

Along with the four elements, God granted to you
 Remarkable weapons fitly polished,
 And in their midst there was a crowned maiden
 Who was made safe/secure in the fifth circle.

In Jungian psychology, the number four has a significance of wholeness. The number five is sometimes associated with the natural human being. Ripley may also have been thinking of the quintessence, the absolutely most essential thing. The protection of the archetypal Feminine, so absolutely essential to the work of transformation, is achieved by protecting Her within "the fifth circle."

31 - Et unguento affluit haec delicioso
 Expurgata sanguine prius menstruoso
 Radiabat undique vultu luminoso
 Adornata lapide omne pretioso.
 And this maiden overflowed with a fragrant anointing
 Having been previously purified
 With a shining face she sent out rays of light from everywhere
 And she was adorned with every precious stone.

32 - Ast in eius gremio viridis iacebat
 Leo, cui aquila prandium ferebat;
 De leonis latere cruor effluebat,
 De manu Mercurii, quem Virgo bibebat.
 Now the green lion lay in her lap
 To whom the eagle was bringing lunch;
 Blood flowed from the lion's side
 From the hand of Mercurius, which the Maiden drank.

33 - Lac, quod mirum extitit, illa propinabat
 Suis de uberibus, quod leoni dabat.
 Eius quoque faciem spongia mundabat,
 Quam in lacte proprio saepe madidabat.
 She delivered milk, which, marvelous there,
 She gave to the lion from her own being.
 She also cleansed his face with a sponge
 Which she often moistened in her own milk.

Milk, and nourishment in general, is associated with the archetypal Good Mother. The Maiden is gently caring for the wounded lion, holding him in her lap, giving him food and milk from a very deep feeling place.

34 - Illa diademate fuit coronate
 Igneoque pedibus aere ablata
 Et in suis vestibus splendide stellata
 Empyrio medio coeli collocata.
 She was crowned with a diadem
 And her feet were lifted up by fiery air
 And, starry in her clothes, she was

With the glittering fire in the middle of the sky.

The element of fire is very prominent in this stanza. Yet it is a positive fire, one that lifts her up and one with whom she seems to have a kind of kinship, sharing the middle of the sky with this fire.

35 - Signis, temporibus, et ceteris planetis,
Circumfusa, nebulis tenebrosis spretis
Quae, contextis crinibus in figuram retis,
Sedit, quam luminibus Rex respexit laetis.
Having been surrounded by signs, times, and the additional planets,
With dark clouds having been taken away,
She, with hair woven into the shape of a net,
Sat, whom the King with glowing eyes looked at.

36 – Fit hic Regum omnium summus triumphator,
Et aegrorum corporum grandis mediator,
Omnium defectuum tantus reformator,
Illi ut obedient Caesar et viator.
This man is made the highest triumphant one of all Kings,
And the great healer of sick bodies,
He is such a re-former of all defects,
That both Caesar and wayfarer obey him.

The king, having experienced healing of his own “original defect,” is now able to heal others: a powerful statement of the archetype of the Wounded Healer. His healing energies stretch beyond social distinctions: he is able to heal both the highest ruler and the homeless wanderer, who have such different ills.

37 - Praelatis et regibus praebens decoramen,
Aegris et invalidis fit in consolamen,
Quis est quem non afficit huius medicamen,
Quo omnis penuriae pellitur gravamen.
To prelates and kings he presents a decoration,
To sick people and weak people he is made a consolation,
Who is there whom his medicine does not heal,
By which all poverty is mightily driven away.

38 - Nostrum Deus igitur nobis det optamen
Illius in speciem per multiplicamen,
Ut gustemus practicae per regeneramen
Eius fructus, uberes et ter dulces. Amen.
Therefore may God give to us our wish
In his appearance through increasing,
So that we might taste his fruit through the regeneration of everyday life
The fruitfulnesses three-fold sweet. Amen.

The Mandala

Since the vessel is itself an energy construct, it need not have a physical form. The archetype of kingship represents one such energy vessel – a profound vessel of centering and transformation.

As noted above, other forms of the vessel emerge. Both “the house of the sphere” and the womb are energy vessels that contain, heal, and perhaps even make possible the king’s transformation. And both of those vessels also reflect the mandala.

A mandala is a geometric shape, usually a circle, a square, or a circle and a square put together (sometimes called “squaring the circle”) that helps an individual, and, as described in the mythological example, a community or even an entire culture, to experience an energy of centering and ordering. In Jungian psychotherapy and analysis, these patterns sometimes emerge spontaneously in dreams, in visions, and/or in drawings or paintings related to depth psychological work. Mandalas and mandala-like patterns usually occur when the psyche is out of balance, experiencing chaos, and needs to re-center.

Jung, in his commentary on the ancient Chinese alchemical text, “The Secret of the Golden Flower,” points out that mandalas may be drawn, and they may also be moving mandalas. For instance, they may be danced. (Jung, 1962, 100) The drawing of the sulcus primigenius – the “first furrow” drawn in a circular pattern around every new Roman city - was also a mandala (Jung, 1962, 102).

For both the individual and the community the mandala can have a powerful energy effect. As Jung notes: The mandala symbol is not only a means of expression, but works an effect. It reacts upon its maker. Very ancient magical effects lie hidden in this symbol, for it derives originally from the “enclosing circle,” the “charmed circle,” the magic of which has been preserved in countless folk customs. The image has the obvious purpose of drawing a sulcus primigenius, a magical [first] furrow around the center, a templum or temenos (sacred precinct) of the innermost personality, in order to prevent “flowing out.” or to guard by apotropaic [warding-off] means against deflections through external influences. (Jung, 1962, 102-103)

Thus the mandala acts to keep protected the innermost, most sacred parts of the psyche. It both protects the self and symbolizes the Self. By means of the mandala the attention or the interest of ego-consciousness is brought back to an inner, sacred domain, which is the source and goal of the personality and which contains the unity of consciousness and of life.

For Jung himself, the mandala emerged as a healing energy during his “confrontation with the unconscious,” as he calls it in his autobiography (Jung, 1963). Nowadays it might also be understood as Jung’s experience of spiritual emergency. This was a time when Jung discovered the archetypal images and energies of the collective unconscious in his own psyche, bringing about profound changes in Jung’s own consciousness and awareness. The energy was so huge and the realizations so shattering that at several points Jung doubted whether he would emerge from this confrontation with his sanity. It was only his anchoring to outer reality, Jung says - his family, his medical practice - that kept him grounded - that, and his emerging connection to the energy of the mandala. Jung came to be able to understand, by the shape and configuration of the mandalas that he drew, what his own energy configuration, his own psychic “weather,” would be for the given day. When psychic unity was lost, the mandala helped Jung to recenter and to find that unity again. Like the king in “Ripley’s Cantilena,” who was “born in the house of the sphere” and whose transformation took place in his mother’s womb, Jung found his own transformation contained within the walls of a healing energy vessel, the mandala.

In the life of the individual, the emergence of mandala patterns – one or more circles, concentric circles, squares surrounded by circles and vice-versa, the Native American medicine wheel pattern of a cross within a circle, the circumambulation (walking around) of a circle or a square, and similar patterns - both herald and heal the chaotic energies which may emerge when the contents of the collective unconscious break through into consciousness. They help the psyche to return to the archetype of order, and they also help to focus energy

within the safe boundaries of a holy space. In ancient Greece, this was called a temenos - the sacred courtyard or other enclosed area where sacred ritual and experience was protected, contained, and bounded.

On a psychological level, for many individuals, drawing or “dancing” a mandala is thus more than an interesting or even powerful energy exercise. As Jung notes, when one is cut off from one’s roots, “anamnesis of the origins” – returning to one’s roots – “becomes a matter of life and death.” (Jung, 1959, 180) The roots about which Jung is writing cannot only be personal roots. They must also be archetypal roots that go beyond the personal. In this sense, they are similar to the Zen koan: “Show me your original face before you were born.” In its focusing of energy and return to the true center of one's very being, the mandala may perform this vital, lifesaving function.

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